

STATEMENT

OF

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BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS

ON BEHALF OF THE

TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT

OF THE

AFL-CIO

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND
TRANSPORTATION

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT MARINE
SUBCOMMITTEE

HEARING ON

EFFECTS OF FATIGUE ON OPERATORS OF TRUCKS AND RAIL
EQUIPMENT

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Madam Chair and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the effects of fatigue on Locomotive Engineers who operate railroad equipment.

As railroads are run today, Locomotive Engineers work in a constant state of jet lag. This is because many Locomotive Engineers work in unassigned service, which means never having a set time to report to work. Until recently, the industry did not consider fatigue an issue. As a result of a series of accidents, where fatigue was a probable cause, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended that the BLE, AAR and FRA address a large number of issues surrounding fatigue. The actions of the NTSB in subsequent studies have gone far. The NTSB needs to be congratulated for their insight. The studies resulting from these recommendations now indicate a need for action.

To its credit, the railroad industry is now recognizing the effects of fatigue and work scheduling. In 1992, the Association of American Railroads (AAR), along with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, formed a Work/Rest Task Force to look at issues involved with human factors accidents and what could be done to address them. This Task Force of rail labor and management began to exchange information in an effort to resolve the identified problems.

Last year, the Federal Railroad Administrator Jolene Molitoris approached the industry partners and challenged them to create a Work/Rest Task Force. The result was the formation of the North American Rail Alertness Partnership (NARAP). The group includes all of the railroad industry and rail labor along with the different regulatory bodies in North America. NARAP is reviewing the best practices of the fatigue countermeasures within the industry and determining where the industry should be headed. The FRA proposal of this working group's efforts would be outside of any regulatory framework and is to be handled in a cooperative approach. Through the NARAP process, all views and positions on the proposed countermeasures could be discussed and differing concerns identified and dealt with by the parties. As an example, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers presented the members of NARAP with a "Wish List of Fatigue Abatement Items." The list is attached.

Both railroad labor and management have put in place fatigue countermeasure projects to help combat fatigue. In the spirit of cooperation, the AAR Work/Rest Task Force and other rail labor organizations have joined with the FRA in the NARAP process.

Canadian railroads have implemented some of these recommended countermeasures:

1. Regular and predictable duty periods.
2. Rest periods.
3. System-wide napping strategy.
4. Modify lodging facilities to improve daytime sleep.
5. Locomotive audio and communication system and work environment improvements.
6. Lifestyle training for all of the employees and their spouses.

7. Alternate pay system.
8. Qualified personnel in locomotives.
9. Hours of service alternatives.

We would like to highlight some of the countermeasures undertaken by several US railroads:

- Conrail: Presently working on developing scheduling for their crews with Pilot projects ongoing in the Buffalo to Toledo corridor; have developed Medical research on the identification of sleep disorders and the proper diagnosis treatment and treatment of those problems; educational programs for fatigue, sleep and diet. All of the work is now on hold until the CSX/NS purchase is completed.
- BNSF: Developed and implemented a system-wide napping strategy for all of their employees; in the process of developing lodging facility standards with the National Sleep Foundation; implementing a locomotive cab standard consistent with the Canadian standards such as 'whisper cabs'; developing pilot projects for scheduling operating crews; looking into research grants for the development of electronic crew calling; developing medical programs to handle sleep disorders; developing terminal napping facilities for crews to rest before and after a tour of duty; looking at crew line-up coupled with better crew planning; educational programs for fatigue, sleep and diet; non-operating crew lodging facilities.
- Union Pacific: Developing and implementing crew scheduling; reviewing lodging facilities; educational programs for fatigue, sleep and diet; system-wide napping strategy in development; developing guidelines for undisturbed rest.
- CSX: Looking at crew scheduling and assigned crews to freight trains; educational programs for fatigue, sleep and diet; developing crew and train line-up systems.
- Illinois Central: A significant number of crews have assigned days off and in turnaround service (to the meeting point and back home).
- Soo Line: In development of a complete crew scheduling program; educational programs for fatigue, sleep and diet; developing lodging standards.

These are just some of the programs underway. However, the railroad industry still has a problem making sure crews are relieved from their trains and in transportation to their off-duty point after completing the federal maximum limit of 12-hours of on-duty time.

All of rail labor and the industries involved with NARAP are working to develop the best practices of alertness and fatigue programs. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the railroad industry continues to support the AAR Task Force in its research and development projects to deal with fatigue and crew scheduling issues.

Through a cooperative approach, rail labor and the railroad industry can ensure fatigue countermeasures are a part of railroad culture. Through the AAR Work/Rest Task Force, NARAP, and a Canadian project called CANALERT, this industry has moved further and faster to address the problem of fatigue than any other mode of transportation. It has done so without government funding.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is prepared to continue to work in a cooperative approach on this issue of such importance to safety and our membership. They need relief now. Our commitment is total. We will solve this problem jointly with the industry.

We applaud the Subcommittee for recognizing a very serious safety concern in the railroad industry. Our hopes lie in a cooperative effort. Our needs demand we solve the problem. If the industry fails to fully address the needs of railroad workers in the area of fatigue, we fully plan to ask Congress to mandate changes in the Hours of Service Act.